

III. CHILD FIND

It is the policy of the State of Iowa that all children with disabilities in the age range from birth through 21 years of age residing in this state, including children with disabilities attending private schools, who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated. A comprehensive child identification system exists in the state that makes it possible to ascertain the number of children with disabilities who are receiving special education and related services.

These provisions apply to all Iowa children including highly mobile children with disabilities and children who are suspected of being a child with a disability and in need of special education, even though they are advancing from grade to grade.

Existing state legislation governing the provision of, and financial support for, special education instructional and support service programs requires the State Education Agency (SEA) in Iowa to assume responsibility for coordinating the planning and implementation of child find policies and procedures.

The delivery of special education instructional and support services to children with disabilities in Iowa is a cooperative endeavor involving state, area education agencies (AEAs), local education agencies (LEAs) and local public and private agencies. The primary responsibility for providing such educational services is assigned to the public educational agencies of Iowa through statutes mandating the education of children with disabilities. Specific statutory requirements relating to the delivery of special education services make it imperative that the Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Children, Family and Community Services, be the principal administering agency of the child find system. Responsibilities of AEAs and LEAs are set forth in Iowa Administrative Code.

AEAs and LEAs may identify students with disabilities using either a categorical or noncategorical model. The critical passage of Iowa policy reads: "Each AEA shall develop written policies pertinent to the provision of special education and related services, and shall make such policies available to the Department upon request. While AEAs may identify students as eligible for special education without designating a specific disability category, it is recognized that in certain circumstances the educational diagnosis of a specific disability, such as autism or sensory impairment, may enhance the development and ongoing provision of an appropriate educational program".

The present system for monitoring the number of children with disabilities within each category is a computerized system used to determine which children are receiving special education and related services. The Department periodically and systematically reviews information from Iowa's information management system to determine the effectiveness of policies and procedures related to child find. If anomalies appear in the data or if other information suggest needed modifications in the system, the Department initiates corrective action within the system. The Iowa Department of Education acknowledges that the collection of data to meet child find requirements is subject to the confidentiality requirements of IDEA.

Iowa code requires AEAs to be accredited by the state. The accreditation process outlined in code calls for AEAs to be monitored every three years. AEAs are required to have a plan in place that outlines the agency's actions to meet the child find standards identified by the State. The plan and the monitoring activities enable the Department of Education to evaluate the effectiveness of the identification process.

In addition, the State of Iowa and AEAs monitor the local school district child find activities through the state's monitoring process.

Iowa's child find system is an ongoing program involving LEAs, AEAs, and the SEA. Initial identification/referral activities are conducted with the Iowa Department of Human Services, the Iowa Department of Public Health, public and private preschool facilities, local hospitals, public and private family and pediatric physicians, and a variety of parent support groups that function within the geographic boundaries of each AEA. These agencies receive periodic updates that describe referral procedures to assist in the child find process. These activities go on throughout the entire year.

The Iowa Department of Education is the lead agency in Iowa for Part C of IDEA. The Department works with Iowa Compass, a comprehensive statewide informal referral service for Iowans with disabilities, their families, professionals who work with them, and other community members. The Iowa Compass website and database are updated monthly to facilitate direct access by consumers.

Legal references

Federal Requirements

- 20 USC 1412 (a)(3).....Requires all children with disabilities to be located
- 34 CFR 300.7Definition of a child with a disability
- 34 CFR 300.125Documents required relating to child find
- 34 CFR 300.451Child find for private school children
- 34 CFR 300.560-577.....Confidentiality of information

Iowa Requirements

Iowa Administrative Rules

- Division VII - Identification 281-41.47-41.56
 - 281-41.12 - Responsibilities of all agencies
 - 281-41.18(1) - AEA Responsibilities
 - 281-41.109 - Independent educational evaluation
 - 281-41.3(3) - Free appropriate public education
 - 281-41.3(4) - Full educational opportunity
 - 281-41.75 - Transition from Part C to Part B
 - 281-41.1 - Scope
 - 281-41.3(2) - Responsibility
 - 281-41.3(1) - Availability
 - 281-41.110 - Surrogate parent procedures
 - 281-41.84 - Instructional services
 - 281-41.29 - Confidentiality of information
 - 281-41.30 -Information recorded and confidentiality maintained